



June 2015

NEWSLETTER FOR THE PAID & VOLUNTEER STAFF OF RAILTOWN 1897 STATE HISTORIC PARK

Upcoming Events

June 6

Annual Singing Rails Festival and Competition celebrating the lore of the railroad in song. Entertaining this year will be The Black Irish Band and The Sierra Mountain Band.

June 9

Railtown Ladies luncheon at Papa's Roost. Call Dottie for info: 533-8483.

June 9

Special Tuesday 'Behind the Scenes' tour with Dieter Teschke.

June 13

Mid Year Training begins for New volunteers 9am-3pm.

June 20

Mid Year training sessions 9am-3pm.

June 21

Father's Day trains.

June 23

Volunteer Picnic at Pine Crest. Call David Deutsch, 604-9372 or Gary Hosman, 532-5313.

June 27

Mid Year training for new Volunteers continues 9am-3p.

June 27

State Landmark No. 1053, The Sierra Railway Shops Dedication ceremony at 11am.

July 1

Wednesday diesel train rides begin. Every Wednesday in July and August (Car Hosts and tour guides are Needed!).

July 4

Happy 4th of July!

July 11

Final mid year training session. Car Host training with Dave Connery.

Characteristics of a Good Tour Guide

The following information is from the manual "Interpreting for Conservation" which was created as helpful training for local nature guides. The organization presenting it is RARE, a group dedicated to inspiring and promoting conservation world wide. They can be found at www.rare.org. I've included the main parts of the text here because much, if not all of it is good advice we can all use as we interpret our park. A good guide is one who: **1.)** Speaks loudly and clearly, **2.)** Uses non-verbal communication (smiles; makes eye contact; uses body language), **3.)** Acts professionally (is punctual; greets tourists; is courteous and attentive; dresses well), **4.)** Prepares in advance (completes a site inventory; researches; practices), **5.)** Provides necessary information for tourists (informs visitors of the location; time and length of tour; informs visitors what they will need to bring and wear; informs visitors of park rules and special considerations), **6.)** Knows the difference between a topical or thematic tour **7.)** Knows the audience (learns about visitors between stops; uses visitor and universally relevant information to make examples more personal), **8.)** Helps tourists learn by themselves (asks questions; engages tourists in guided discovery; ask's questions and giving helpful hints to help tourists figure things out on their own), **9.)** Has a "message" for every tour (simple full sentence "message"; message is original; **Note: ties the message to our interpretive master plan*), **10.)** Prepares a structure for every tour (uses an introduction, stops and a conclusion; writes an outline; stops at exhibit attractive resources which are appropriate examples of the "message"), **11.)** Can make a tour dynamic (uses games, activities or demonstrations; uses sense activities besides vision; uses natural objects or props), **12.)** Uses interesting language (relays history and stories appropriate to the message), **13.)** Manages the group (makes sure everyone can see and hear well; assures visitors safe passage; handles unexpected situations; chooses comfortable locations for stops), **14.)** Relays accurate information and handles difficult questions (is honest with an "I don't know"; writes down visitor questions and follows up with answers), **15.)** Suggest relevant cultural preservation (illustrates problems related to preservation; suggests actions tourists can take to help protect and preserve our resource, **Note: can become a member of the California State Railroad Museum Foundation*), **16.)** Evaluates the tour (asks questions at the end; does self evaluation; distribute survey and invites the visitor(s) to fill it out and either collect the survey or has visitors leave them in the Depot Store), **17.)** Continues to learn and improve the tour. (good food for thought!)

(Photo on the right: Tom Hull leads a large group for a tour, Anthony LaNotte displays the Operation Lifesaver booth)



Railtown News

6th Annual Singing Rails Festival honoring the legend and lore of the railroad in song will take place Saturday, June 6th. Featured is the annual competition for vocalists and instrumentalist, competing for the coveted Golden, Silver and Bronze Spike awards, for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place. The adult category is for 17 years and older. The junior category is for ages 16 and under. The competition goes from 11am to 5pm. Featured bands this year are local favorites, The Black Irish Band and The Sierra Mountain Band. Please help spread the word for this unique event!

Father's Day Trains will take place on Saturday, June 21st. Special treats for dads who ride with kids!

(news that relates to Railtown is welcome! Please submit by email to dave.rainwater@parks.ca.gov)



Volunteers Brian McMahon, Eric Neilsen and Greg Romelfaner working the fire patrol



Al Lehr demonstrating the "ring of fire" in the roundhouse



Andrew Benton working on the riveting on the No 28



Maintenance worker Phil Hard preparing a rivet for the No 28



Kim Baker

Message from our Park Superintendent

The other day, I received a report we had a problem in the picnic area. Since I was sitting in my office, I pulled up the video surveillance camera, and watched for a few minutes before heading out. What I saw was 4 junior high-aged kids, hopping from table to table. My initial reaction was “Egads!” But, then I stopped to think about it—Is there a law against picnic table hopping? No. Are there other visitors being disturbed? No. Are they causing damage to the tables? No.

Hmmm. Well, what about the germs getting on the tables from their shoes?

Don’t other visitors have the expectation of clean tables? Maybe. (But when I went out there I noticed bird droppings on all the tables, so that one’s out). After pondering a few minutes, I went out to talk with the kids. “Check out this trick I can do!” one boy said to me as I approached. He demonstrated an impressive leapfrog over the table, an accomplishment which clearly took some practice and effort. I chatted with the kids a few minutes. They were excited about school being out for the summer. They were courteous and polite. They showed concern for the park and the picnic tables. I talked with them about my concern for other visitors who might want to use the tables while they were there, possible damage from skateboard “grinding” on the tables or the dock, and how to let us know when they saw other people causing damage to the park resources. It was a positive contact which will hopefully instill a sense of stewardship in the park. And, with no other visitors around, I left them to practice their acrobatics.

You may disagree with my approach, and you may still be cringing that maybe their activity was inappropriate. It is important that we consider existing laws, policies and identified risks when impose rules on park visitors. Recently I have handled several complaints from park visitors who had a bad experience at the park as a result of “rules” which may have been better characterized as “personal values”. As the designated risk manager for the park, I have concerns when I hear of volunteers or staff yelling at park visitors who are near the tracks at the water tank. Did you know that this area is open to the public, and is on our park map? When we yell at visitors, we are being counter-productive to our efforts to build friends and supporters for our park. Similarly, when we tell parents to make sure their toddlers are sitting with their bottoms on the seat in the train, did you know they cannot see out the window? Toddlers need to kneel or stand or order to see out the train, and when we tell them they can’t, we remove the entire motivation for their visit. Of course, we would rely on the judgment of our volunteers in the case of children who don’t have parents nearby, but we have yet to lose a child out the window on any of our trains. Feet on seats, and parents changing diapers on near-empty trains are other recent “rules” I have heard mentioned by visitors this year. So, next time you talk to a visitor about a “rule”, please consider whether it really is a rule. Is it in the volunteer manual, the code of regulations or other law and policy documents? If you aren’t sure, ask the EIC or the volunteer coordinator but please be cautious about perpetuating “personal values” disguised as “rules”. Enforcing rules for the sake of rules can be counterproductive to making friends for parks.

Volunteer Picnic’s at Pinecrest Lake

All volunteers are invited to the monthly volunteer picnics at Pinecrest under the pines. Every summer season everyone gathers and enjoys a cool lakeside gathering with fellow Railtown volunteers for a pot luck BBQ at Pinecrest. This year the picnics will be held from 4pm to 6pm on the last Tuesday of each month. The dates for your calendars are: June 23, July 28, August 25 and September 22. If the weather permits, there’ll be a picnic at 11am on October 27 (this one is a brunch). The BBQ stoves, coffee pot and tables are provided. What should you bring? Bring a meat to cook, drinks, side dishes to share, eating utensils, lawn chairs and a small cooler. Where is it located? Turn right at the Pinecrest Lake turn off and drive to the 2nd restroom building on your left, and look for your fellow volunteers at the picnic tables. For information call David Deutsch at 209-604-9372 or Gary Hosman at 209-532-5313.

All are invited to come and have a good time!



PO Box 1250
Jamestown, CA 95327
Return Service Requested

TO:



Depot Store- (209) 984-3953
Volunteer Desk- (209) 984-4408
Volunteer Website- <http://railtown.team.parks.ca.gov/volunteers>
Railtown Blog- www.railtown1897.wordpress.com
Newsletter Editor— Dave.Rainwater@parks.ca.gov
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Railtown Paid and Volunteer Staff Contact Information

(all area codes are 209)

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Newsletter Available in Alternative Format on Request